

Preface

The last decade has witnessed a tremendous increase in the knowledge about the mammalian diversity of the world, owing much to the increased awareness (by both mammalogists and others), intensive surveys (backed by modern technologies), and advances in the application of molecular techniques. The Global Mammal Assessment, coordinated by the International Union for Nature Conservation, resulted in the conservation assessment for all 5,487 species of known marine and land mammals. This comprehensive assessment, involving over 1,700 experts from all over the world, indicates that a quarter of the known mammalian diversity of the world is under threat of extinction and that the population of half of the species of mammals is declining. At the regional scale, the same holds true.

The dearth of information and expertise in the South Asia has been long felt and each country within the region has initiated steps to fill this lacunae. Our motivation for this book comes from a desire to provide a comprehensive information of all the extant and extinct (since 1500 AD) mammals of South Asia with emphasis on their distribution. We started this project with volant and non-volant small mammals of South Asia in 2002 and later included other groups. This book is aimed as a reference tool to help researchers, field biologists, decision makers, governments (both federal and local), students and lay person to understand the rich diversity, taxonomy, distribution, and status of the mammalian species present in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. There are but a few references available that detail the mammalian diversity in each of these countries but none of them provides the provincial level distribution at the regional scale on the whole.

Since the publication of the Third Edition of the *Mammal Species of the World*, edited by D.E. Wilson and D.M. Reeder in 2005, many new species have been described and new hypotheses for classifications have been proposed. We have, at

best, incorporated recent changes in this work. Due to the dynamic and fluid nature of taxonomy, more changes are inevitable and we plan to update and incorporate them in future editions. We hope that this book serves its purpose as a useful reference for both the neophytes and the experts alike.

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